

A
SERMON

Preached to the
Loving Society

At St. Dunstons in the West; on Wednesday the 1st. of July. 1685.

And Published at their Desire.

By Thomas Aston, M. A.

L O N D O N,

Printed by W. Wilde for Dan. Brown. at the black Swan
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PERMONT

Presented to the

Learning Society

At the request of the Society; on Wed.
the 10th of Sep. 1887.

And Published at their Desire.

By Thomas Allen M.A.

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TO
COLLONEL
John Friend,

SIR,

YOU have shew'd me so many
Favors, that I am neither able
to requite, nor to number them.
Yet I have a further request, being
[in a nature] compell'd to publish
A 2 a Sermon

The Epistle Dedicatory.

*a Sermon; I humbly presume to lay
it at your Feet, and beg your Patro-
nage.*

Worthy SIR,

your most obliged

Affectionate Minister

Thomas Aston.

(5)

A SERMON

Preached to the

Loving Society, &c.

Isaiah, 57, 21.

*There is no Peace saith my God, to
the Wicked.*

SO ill sounding an accent, is the
Alarm of War; that it makes
those that hear it to tremble: so
sweet is the message of Peace, that
it is as a Cordial to the Heart.
The proclaimer of War is terrible,
but *how beautiful upon the Mountain* Isaiah. 52. 7.

A 2

tains

tains are the Feet of those that bring
 Tydings of Peace? they have both
 the same Master, the same Prophet
 proclaims these different tenours,
 from the same Authority. This
 Herald was sent to Jerusalem: to
 tell her that her Warfare was ended:
 Then he brought an Olive Branch
 of Peace; here he proclaims War
 and both sealed with the Kings Sig-
 net. Comfort ye my People saith
 your God, there is no Peace saith my
 God to the Wicked.

Isaiah. 40. 2.

Isaiah. 40. 1.

Wherein observe 1st. the Thing pro-
 claimed, 2^{dly}. the Person proclaiming
 and 3^{dly}. the Parties against whom.
 The Proclamation is War, negative-
 ly set down, *there is no Peace*; which
 is more binding than a positive Af-
 fertion. The Herald or Party Pro-
 claiming, is no less than a Prophet
 but

but not from himself, but from the King of Kings, which has an indisputable Power to grant a Commission, being God, to whom he expresseth his Relation my God. The Parties against whom, viz. **Wicked.** Tho' God is a God of Peace, yet he hath Enemies against whom he doth wage War from generation to generation. *There is no Peace to the Wicked.*

First of the Proclamation, *There is no Peace.* I shall not lead you into a common place, to shew the sweet Fruits of Peace, and the bitter Effects and lamentable Calamities of War; I may say of it with wise King Solomon, *He that encreaseth Knowledge, encreaseth Sorrow.* Eccles. 1. 18.

Field of Conscience, to the eternal Torments of the Devil and his Angels.

-I shall conjoyn the War and the Enemy, the ~~Wicked~~ and no Peace, Oh heavy Doom aggravated by the generality of the Persons and the universality of time and place: no wicked Man at any time, in any place can be exempted. The proposition will bear this, being an universal Negative.

A wicked Man hath neither Peace of Grace here, nor Peace of Glory hereafter, but as he passeth from sin to sin, from one wickedness to another; so he passeth from one punishment to another, from one War to another, from one Hell to another, from Flashes into Flames from the inward Torment of the Fiend of Conscience, to the eternal Torments of the Devil and his Angels.

Thus

Thus you see *there is no Peace to the Wicked*, at any time, nor in any place, nor [indeed] with any Person. 1st. not with God 2ly. not with Man, and 3dly. not with themselves. Upon these three I shall ground my present Discourse.

First, the Wicked have **no Peace with God**. The Scripture tells us plainly they *Enemies to God*, *Sons of Wrath, set on fire of Hell. Ali-
ens from the Common-Wealth of Is-
rael, and Strangers from the Covenant
of Grace*. Being such they are with-
out Christ, and consequently with-
out peace, for *he is our Peace*. He
is our Peace-maker. *When we were E-
nemies, we were reconciled to God by
the Death of his Son. In him God is
well pleased; and for him he is well
pleased with us*. Without Christ we
B are

Pſalm 21. 8.

Eph. 2. 3.

St. Jam. 3. 6.

Eph. 2. 12.

14.

Rom. 5. 10.

St. Luke 3. 21.

St. Luke 3. 22.

are Enemies ; through him we are Friends of, and United to God.

The Apostle affirms, that some Men have not Faith. 2. *Thessa.* 3. 1. 2. *Pray for us, &c. That we may be delivered from unreasonable and Wicked Men: for all Men have not Faith. Heb. 11. 6. Without Faith it is impossible to please God. And this great King will not be at Peace with those that displease him. Without Faith no justification, and we must be justified before we can have peace with God. So long then as men continue in their unbelief, they can have no Peace.*

1 Sam. 15. 23.

Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft and Witchcraft is a kind of de-throning God Almighty, and [as far as the Creature is able] a setting

(II)

ting the Devil in his place. This
hainous Sin we are guilty of, if we
rebel, and we do rebel if we diso-
bey Gods Commandments: and
this is one of his Statutes; *Touch not* Pſalm. 105. 15.
mine anointed. This is one Com-
mandment, *Let every Soul be sub-* Rom. 13. 1.
ject unto the higher Powers. This is
one Precept, *Pray for Kings and for* 1. Tim. 2. 2.
all that are in Authority. This is one
Commandment, *Submit your selves* 1. St Peter. 2. 13.
to every Ordinance of Man, for the
Lords ſake, whether it be unto the
King as Supream, or unto Governours 14.
as unto them that are ſent by him. He
then that draws his Sword, or lifts
up his Hand againſt his lawful So-
veraign, the Lords anointed, is not
only an Enemy, a Traytor, a Rebel
to the King, but alſo to the King of
Kings, he proclaims open War a-
gainſt him, he ſhall have *no Peace.*

And he doth not only proclaim,
but hath joyned Battle, and fought
with the Wicked from Heaven, on
Earth, and summon'd Powers from
under the Earth.

First from Heaven. There is men-
tion made of three Heavens, and
from all he has opposed the Wick-
ed. From the highest Heaven by his
Angels; An Angel was sent to destroy
the *Assyrians* ; an Angel was sent to
be the Death of *Herod*. By his Saints
for tho' they know not the desires of
Men in particular, yet they pray in
general, that God may be avenged of
such as molest his Church. Rev. 6.
10. *Crying with a loud Voice, saying
how long O Lord, Holy and True, dost
thou not judge, and avenge our Blood
on them that dwell on the Earth.*

He

2. Kings. 10
35.

Act. 12. 23.

He has fought with them from the second Story, *The Stars in their Courses fought against Sisera. The Sun stood still, and hasted not to go down about a whole day, and the Moon stayed until the People had avenged themselves upon their Enemies.* For Judges. 5. 20. Joshua. 10. v. 13. the Lord hearken'd unto the Voice of a Man; and fought for Israel.

From the lowest Heaven. *He bringeth the Winds and Storms out of his Treasure, and persecuteth the Wicked with his Tempest. Hailstones from Heaven were showed down, to slay the wicked Amorites. Psalm. 11. 6. upon the Ungodly he shall rain snares, fire and Brimstone, Storm and Tempest: this shall be their Portion to drink.*

Secondly,

Secondly, He hath fought with them on earth. The earth opened and swallowed the *Rebellious Chorites*. The Sea drowned the *Ægyptians*.

Thirdly, He hath brought Forces from beneath to War against them. *An evil Spirit from the Lord vexed Saul*. And we read in the Gospel, of foul Spirits that haunted many, made some deaf, some dumb, drove some into the Water, some into the Fire. All which as actions proceed from God ; for *there is no Power but of God*. The Devil cannot stir but when and so far as God pleaseth.

Rom. 13. 1.

God Almighty's hand is not shor-ten'd ; what he hath done, we may certainly expect he will do. He will

will vex, overthrow the wicked, they shall have *no Peace*.

Secondly, The Wicked have **no Peace with Men**. *Solomon* tells us, *there is a time for War, and a time of Peace*: But the time of Peace, the Wicked cannot be said to enjoy; for when they sing Peace, Peace, then Destruction is hard at hand, Like Oxen they are pampered and fed, but it is but for the Slaughter; But generally, *The Wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest; whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt.* verse. 29. They are turbulent in their own Nature, and instead of Peace on Earth, they send a Sword, and are Seminaries of Discord.

But there is little need to trouble my self, or you, to prove that the Wicked have no outward Peace with
Men;

Men ; since both Nature, and the Holy Scripture gives us So convincing a reason, which is this : Righteousness is the elder Sister to Peace.

Aristotle in his *Æthicks* tells us, that Agreement in Evil, is not Amity, but Conspiracy. *The Tabernacles of the Edomites and Ishmalites, the Moabites and Hagarens* may cast their Heads together with one consent, and be confederate. *Herod and Pilate* may agree against Christ. All the Dissenters [tho' they differ among themselves] agree in their Opposition to the Church ; but this agreement does not proceed from a Principle of Love, 'tis only the product of a joynt hatred in them towards others, and doth not deserve the Name of Peace, 'tis meer Confederacy.

The

The Royal Prophet, who spake part of the lively Oracles of God, clears this Point. *Psalm.* 85. 10. *Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other*: For that Man can never be a true Friend to any, that is not a Friend to Truth it self; he can never be Faithful to any that confide in him, that is perfidious to his God. *What Peace* [*said Jehu to Jehoram*] *so long as the Whoredoms of thy Mother Jezebel and her Witchcrafts are so many?* 2. King 9. 22. And how can we expect Peace on Earth, and good Will among Men: so long as Whoredom, Drunkenness, rash, and false Swearing, Lying, Deceit, Rebellion, & Treason are so frequent among us? Peace is as inconsistent with Wickedness, as Light with Darkness. St. *James*, 4. 1. asketh the question *From whence come Wars, and fightings*

C

ings among you ? come they not hence, even of your lusts ? This is the reason ; because Men keep not the unity of the Faith, they have broken the Bond of Peace. We put up our Petitions for Peace, and may the Prince of Peace accept our Devotion. But we cannot pray for it, but with *St. Pauls* limitation ; *if it be possible,* and 'tis impossible to be at Peace with Scismaticks and Phanaticks, since they are professed Enemies both to Truth and Peace : *When we speak of Peace [saith King David] they make ready for Battle.*

But [my Friends] I can shew you the good and right way, to make even your Enemies to be at Peace with you ; *Viz. When a Mans Ways please God :* this great King will be his Advocate to those that plead with him, and fight against those that fight against him. Now

Now I come to the 3d. Position ;
viz. that the Wicked have *neither*
Peace one with another, nor in their
own Consciences.

First they have very seldom *A-*
greement among themselves. *I will*
[saith God) set Ægyptians against
Ægyptians, and they shall fight every
one against his Brother, and every one
against his Neighbour, Kingdom a-
gainst Kingdom, and City against Ci-
ty, Ephraim against Manasseh, and
Manasseh against Ephraim, the
Sadduces against the Pharisees, and
the Pharisees against the Sadduces,
and a Mans Foes may be those of his
own Household.

Do so, Oh Lord, to our Enemies,
 divide them, let every Mans Sword
 be against his Fellow, but let us ever
 escape them.

Secondly, they have **no Peace in their own Conscience s.** I have shewed you already, that they have no Peace with God ; and Peace of Conscience ariseth from Peace with him. The Conscience is never at Peace until sin be pardoned, and being without Christ, their sin remaineth : and their Conscience will one day be a thousand Witnesses to accuse them.

This Evil Conscience may be considered two ways, either too quiet, or too unquiet ; both directly opposite to a peaceable Conscience.

First, Conscience may be **too quiet** ; This [you'll say] is a Paradox. A Conscience quiet and not peaceable ! This overquiet Conscience is, when a
man.

Man *seared as with a hot Iron* is past 1. Tim. 4. 2. feeling, *viz.* when the custom, and habit of Sin hath taken away the sence of it. When a Man is given up to *a reprobate mind to work all uncleanness with greediness*, when neither threatnings can terrifie, judgments move, nor promises allure him; then Conscience is too quiet. That Army must needs be surprized, where there is no Watches, no Alarums to give Warning. When the Pulse beats not, the Party is near his Death. He that is ignorant of his Sicknes, will never apply himself to a Physitian. He's most desperately sick, who feels not his Distemper. So if Conscience do not do its Office to accuse and excuse, 'tis dangerously ill. There is the greatest danger in such a calm, or rather insensibility of Conscience; nay, such a Numness, or Lethargy is the

Deu. 28. 28.

the greatest punishment. The Lord threatned the *Israelites*, that he would *smite them with Blindness, and Astonishment of Heart* : meaning, that he would inflict upon them such an insensible dulness, that in doing Evil, they should be without apprehension of the Evil ; and such a heavy Judgment fell upon them ; for when they were pressed by *Pilate* to release Christ, they in their implacable Fury neither knowing what they did, nor said, horribly curs'd themselves, crying out, *his Blood be on us and on our Children*. And God Almighty is just and true in his dealing with them ; for ever since to this day they have been Vagabonds, and have no City to dwell in , and are hatred of God, and Man.

Thus

Thus you see what a sore Judgment stupidity of Conscience is. Such are naked, and not ashamed : they drink deadly Poison, and cannot perceive it : their Wounds are so deep, that they had rather they should fester, than be searched. They will not War against sin, but are at peace with Hell.

Conscience is privy to all our good and evil actions ; and doth either vindicate, or condemn us. It is a practical Syllogism in our understanding ; the Major whereof is Gods Law, the Minor is our application of that Law to our selves, approving in our Actions what is good, and disliking what is evil. As Gods Secretary, it Records all our Actions, and Thoughts , and Words in a Book of remembrance ; and if it be
not

not called to give Testimony here, it will be called at the general Audit to make answer for whatsoever has been *done in the body, whether it be good, or bad.*

Men are now so carried away with the Delights of this Life, that they have no leasure to take notice of the checks of Conscience : but in the day of Judgment they shall be brought to light, and every Mans Conscience will acknowledge the Justice of the Sentence of the Righteous Judge. Conscience is now a secret Witness, only known to the Person whose it is ; but then all shall be made manifest, and apparent to all.

But this Conscience will appear a greater Enemy, if we consider the next degree, which is a **too disquiet Con-**

Conscience. This is fain'd by the Poet to be one of the three Furies of Hell. For tho' a Man use all means imaginable; Wine, Musick, Society to quiet it, when it is once awaked out of that past feeling, and deluding Dream, he endures a Hell upon Earth. This moved *Solomon* to ask the Question. *A Wounded Spirit who can bear?* Then no Wisdom can counsel him, no Eloquence perswade him; then no Physick can cure, nor Riches ransom him from this tormenting Fiend. And it is such a Tormentor, as the Wretch always carries about him; he continually feels those inward Flashes, and Flames: he can find no comfort abroad, nor please himself at home; but in all places, and at all times hellish Haggs, and infernal Furies afright him. A Man may

Prov. 13. 14.

D

fly

notus

fly from, and escape an outward E-
 nemie, but he cannot fly from him-
 self. The Murderer of *Symmacus*,
 [being at Supper] thought he saw his
 Visage in the head of a Fish, served
 up to the Table. And it is reported
 of *Richard* the third, that [as a Judg-
 ment for his bloody Act upon his
 two Nephews] he dreamed the De-
 vil did haul and pull him in most
 hideous and ugly shapes. *Cain* and
Judas were dogg'd at their heels by
 their tormenting Consciences: the
 death of the former is not so noto-
 rious; but you know how the other
 was brought to his dismal end. His
 Conscience was a Bayliff to arrest, a
 Justice to commit him, a Jaylor to
 imprison, and a Witness to accuse
 him, a Jury to find him guilty, and
 a Judge to condemn him, a Sheriff
 to convey him to the Place of Exe-
 cution.

Prince Edward
 and Richard
 D. of York in
 the Tower.

cution, and a Hangman to end one Misery, and begin a greater.

'Tis true a **Tender Conscience**, is a blessing, it *worketh Repentance never* 2. Cor. 7. 10. *to be repented of* ; it prevents sin, and makes a Man circumspect in his Ways. It was happy for King *David*, that his Conscience check'd him for his Adultery, and Murther, and numbring the People; this wrought in him a Godly Sorrow, exprest by his penitential and hearty Prayers. It was happy for the *Apostle Peter*, that his Conscience check'd him for denying his good Lord and Master ; he wept bitterly , discovered his own weakness, and became a stronger Pillar in the Church of God. But there may be a tender Conscience in Masquerade, I do not need to take up much time to distinguish.

'Tis very apparent, some presume upon a tender Conscience when really they have none. By their Fruits you may know them. When you see a Man scrupulous at an innocent Ceremony, bowing at the name of *Jesus*, kneeling at the Sacrament, &c. and yet make no Conscience to lye, to deceive, to speak evil of Dignities, to be drunk, to commit uncleanness: you may well conclude that Mans scrupulosity proceeds not from Conscience [properly so called] but from erroneous Fancy; and this is that our pretended conscientious Schismatics, [who disturb the Peace of our Church] are possessed off. Indeed he is not a good Christian who is not conscious of his Failings, and Aberrations, and doth not earnestly beseech a Pardon for Christs sake, with strong cries, prayers,

Wandring

ers, and Tears, wherewith God is
 well pleased to be importun'd: But
 a Man may as easily see the diffe-
 -rence between these two, as between a
 real Monarch and a personated
 King, on a Stage: The one cryes
 out against Sin; the other against
 Superstition and Idolatry, nicknaming
 Decency and Order. The counterfeit
 -Conscience is hateful to the true God,
 the unfeigned is his Delight; and
 the gracious Redeemer of mankind
 will wipe away all Tears from such:
 they shall see their Obligation can-
 -cell'd, their Debt paid; for the Blood
 of Jesus Christ cleanseth them from all
 Sin. But the Wicked are condem-
 -ned by their Conscience. Their secret
 Faults, [whereof they would take no
 Cognizance, when it might be ad-
 -vantagious to them,] their lying in
 wait for Blood, their private lurking

in thievish Corners, their secret slanders, their Covetousness, their Rebellion, covered over with a superficial Holiness; all these, and whatsoever else they are guilty of, are well known to Conscience; and it will accuse, and condemn them.

Thus I have briefly shew'd, that the wicked have no Peace with God nor with Men, nor among themselves, nor in their own Consciences. For tho' for a time, they may seem quiet, they are not peaceable, 'tis only from carnal security. I shall now descend to some practical Conclusions.

First we may conclude, that **Sin in the habit without Remorse**; [which amounts to Wickedness] **inevitably brings misery, no Peace**; consequently **War, ruine to the Wicked**. Yet because **Sentence against an Evil Work is not**

not executed speedily; therefore the Ecclef. 8. 11.
 Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully
 set in them to do evil. But it shall
 not be well with the Wicked, nei- v. 13.
 ther shall he prolong his days. The
 wicked Man [because he is not pre-
 sently struck with a Thunderbolt]
 Fancies that God takes no notice
 of his actions, and will not punish
 him for them; these things hast
 thou done and I kept silence: thou
 thoughtest that I was altogether such
 a one as thy self, but I will reprove
 thee, and set them in Order before Psalms. 50. 25.
 thine Eyes. Now consider this yee
 that forget God, yee that approve,
 and caress your selves in any known
 sin, whether concupiscence, drunk-
 enness, rash swearing, disobedience to
 Governours, or deceit and fraud.
 Consider this yee that speak of good
 evil and of evil good, that give base
 Schism,

Schism, and ungodly Rebellion, the glorious Title of Religion, and the true Worship, and Service of God, the ignominious name of Superstition : yee put *Light for Darknes, and Darknes for Light.* Yee can have no Peace; God will War against you, he will break you in pieces while there is none to help. Man will War against you; like *Ishmael your hand will be against every Man, and every Mans Hand against you.* Your own Conscience will War against you, prosecute and condemn you. You shall have no Peace. Consider how fearful a thing it is, to be at variance with all these, and therefore labour to be at Peace with God, and then what Man? what Angel? what Devil can be against you? If as yet you apprehend him your adversary, agree with him quickly; seek him
early

early whilst he may be found, call upon him, while he is near; 'tis not yet too late: beseech him to forgive you your unrighteousness, and to cover all your Sin, and to be at peace with you through the intercession of your blessed Mediator; so shall you not only enjoy the unspeakable Blessing, *The Peace of God which passeth all understanding.* But Peace with Men. Not only with good Men, who are not apt to be at variance; but even with your Enemies, and Peace in your own Consciences, which is a continual Feast. But if you fight against God, by an unchaste Conversation, and wicked Life, then the Lord will fight against you even with the Rod of the ungodly; those that are as wicked, or more wicked than your selves, shall be

E

your

your Scourges. For we may be well assured that if the Wise Disposer of all Things, should give the Rebel Enemies the Victory, [which God in mercy forbid, I hope there is no danger of them] it is not for any love to them, but partly for the Chastisement, and so for the amendment of Gods erring and straying Servants; and partly, that the Wicked being promoted, may have the greater Downfal.

Secondly, We may conclude that, **The only way to obtain Peace, is to do Righteousness.** Men generally regard their own advantage, what more forceable inducement to persuade Men to be just, good, meek, religious than this? This great

great blessing *Peace*, is the portion,
 the inheritance of the Righteous ;
 wherefore the wicked intermeddle
 not in it. *Peace* is Gods Creature.
I create the fruits of the Lips, Peace,
Peace. As in this *Chap.* he can con-
 vert cursing Traytors and Rebels :
 and make cruel *Esau* dissolve into
 Tears in his Brothers Bosom, whom
 he had vowed to kill. In a word,
 the only way to wound our Ene-
 mies is to mortifie our selves ; so
 shall Sinners be converted unto us :
 so shall God even our God, give us
 his Blessing : the Blessing of all possi-
 ble Peace ; the Blessing of Plenty ;
 all good things *shall be ministred unto*
us in this Life, and after this Warfair
 is ended, he who is the *Prince of*
Peace will Crown us with Victory.

F I N I S.